

[Press Release regarding recent statements]

Guyana Vice President Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo was quoted, in reference to Suriname's Agriculture Minister, by publisher Oilnow:

*"... Suriname and some of the Ministers, especially the Minister of Agriculture, the one there. I do not have any faith in him. He's a shady character. I need to say that, shady character, with what he did with the fishermen licenses,"*

Suriname Seafood Association, Federatie van Surinaamse Agrariers and Vissers Collectief express the utmost disappointment in said statements of the Vice President of Guyana. It is not only in poor form and unbecoming for a high ranking official and former head of state, to address ones personal judgments of a foreign dignitary from a neighboring state in such a manner. The contents and merits of the statement made are unsound and not based in fact whatsoever.

The organizations express that inquiries into the supposed written commitments have been made, under the notification and willingness to obtain these supposed commitments as well as the terms, if necessary through litigation. The National Assembly has requested clarification and never received such documents. In any case, no such document would bind the Minister of Agriculture as the sole empowered official, lawfully to grant sea fishery permits. It has been acknowledged since that no agreement between these states has been passed.

As an active and leading member in Cabinet positions at the Guyana government for decades, Dr. Jagdeo has had ample opportunity to promote the interest of fisherfolk in Guyana and sustainable fishery both nationally and in the region. Instead, his policies have allowed for fishery resources to reach the critical state where activities in foreign waters have become the discussion.

The organizations call on all parties to place sustainable and legal fishery and the protection and responsible management of natural resources at the forefront.